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The Indian (Hindu) Calendar and Kali Yuga

QUESTION: Does Yoga prescribe the use of a particular calendar?

ANSWER: The Holy Land of India is the sacred ground on which Yoga Dharma has flourished for millennia. It is only natural, therefore, that Yoga has close links to Indian culture and civilisation. In consequence, the calendar used in Yoga is practically the same as the one currently used in India.

Solar and Lunar Years

The Traditional Indian Calendar is one of the most beautiful and fascinating calendars known to Mankind. It is also the oldest in use today, being mentioned in the Ancient Scriptures of India (Rig Veda). It ingeniously combines solar and lunar references to accurately calculate the passage of time.

The basis for this is provided by two naturally occurring, parallel cycles:

1. The progression of the Sun along the twelve Constellations of the Zodiac from Aries to Pisces. This **Solar Cycle** determines the Year and the Seasons. Thus the Year commences with the Sun's entrance into the Constellation of Aries, which translated into Western time-reckoning falls on the Spring Equinox (22 March). This is known as **Yugadi** or the First Day of the Solar Year which consists of twelve months ending on the day before the next Spring Equinox.

2. The phases of the Moon. The Moon has four basic Phases: New Moon, First Quarter, Full Moon and Last Quarter, occurring at intervals of approximately seven days. A set of four such Phases constitutes one "Moon" or Lunar Month of thirty lunar days or Tithis (Digits). Twelve such Months make up one Lunar Year.

The **Lunar Cycle** is calculated as commencing with the last New Moon before the Spring Equinox (22 March). This is known as the First Day of the Lunar Year which ends with the New Moon before the next Spring Equinox. (Lunar New Year's Day may also be calculated as the fourth New Moon from Winter Solstice - 22 December).

The Indian Solar Year has a duration of 365.258 days which are divided into twelve months of varying lengths (29-31 days). As the Lunar Month lasts 29.5 days it is shorter than most Solar Months. To harmonise the Lunar Year with the Solar Year, an extra month (Adhika Masa) is added to the Lunar Cycle every thirty months.

The Months of the Indian Year

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Solar Months are reckoned as lasting from one Zodiac Sign to the next. Thus the Sun's passage through one Zodiac Sign determines the length of each month. All Indian months are named after the Sanskrit name of Constellations. They are indicated below alongside their Western equivalent:

1. Chaitra	(22 March - 20 April)
2. Vaisakha	(21 April - 21 May)
3. Jyeshtha	(22 May - 21 June)
4. Ashadha	(22 June - 22 July)
5. Shravana	(23 July - 22 August)
6. Bhadrapada	(23 August - 22 September)
7. Ashvina	(23 September - 22 October)
8. Karttika	(23 October - 21 November)
9. Margashirsha (Agrahayana)	(22 November - 21 December)
10. Pausha	(22 December - 20 January)
11. Magha	(21 January - 19 February)
12. Phalgunा	(20 February - 21 March)

Lunar Months are reckoned as lasting from one New Moon to the next and are named after the Solar Months in which they begin. For example, if New Moon falls on February 8th, then the Lunar Month beginning on that date will take the name of the Solar Month Magha (which lasts from 21 Jan to 19 Feb, see chart). The following Month will take the name of Phalgunā, etc.

An alternative method is to count from Full Moon to Full Moon and name each Lunar Month after the following Solar Months.

In practice, it makes little difference which method we use as each Lunar Month is divided into two halves or fortnights, one called "bright" and the other "dark" according as the Moon is waxing (growing) or waning (diminishing), and the days are counted from the beginning of each fortnight. The main difference is Spiritual or religious in nature, as New Moon, in Yoga, is especially sacred to Lord Shiva - as will be explained later.

The Week

The **Solar Month** is divided into approximately four seven-day Weeks, just as in the Western Calendar. Similarly, the days of the Week are named after the Celestial Bodies, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and the Sun.

The **Lunar Month**, on the other hand, has no weeks. Instead, it is divided into Fortnights or Half Months (Ardha Masa) which are also known as Paksha (Wings). The two halves of the Month (1) from New Moon to Full Moon and (2) from Full Moon to New Moon are conceived of as the two

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"wings" of the Moon: one called Bright (Shukla Paksha) and the other Dark (Krishna or Bahula Paksha).

As the two Half Months have 15 days each, Lunar Days are named after their corresponding Sanskrit ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, etc.) with the exception of the 15th which is called Full Moon (Purnima) and the 30th which is called New Moon or Conjunction (Amavasya).

What is New Moon?

An important point that requires clarification at this stage is the exact definition of "**New Moon**". In everyday language, **New Moon** means the First Crescent when seen after the Moon's Conjunction with the Sun. However, in astronomical terms, "New Moon" means the Day of Conjunction itself, on which **No Moon** is seen in the Sky. It is in this, second sense that "New Moon" is used here. This is also the meaning of the Indian term, "Amavasya".

The reason why no Moon is seen on New Moon or Conjunction Day (Amavasya), is because at the moment of New Moon, the Moon is positioned right between the Sun and Earth in such a way as for the Moon's sunlit half to be facing the Sun while her dark half is facing the Earth.

This special position of the Moon means that both Sun and Moon rise at approximately the same time in the same place on the horizon, travel across the sky together, and finally set, the Moon remaining all the while positioned between the Sun and Earth.

This is why New Moon in Sanskrit is called the **Conjunction or Dwelling-together (Amavasya) of Sun and Moon**. The visual effect of this is that the disc of the Moon is outshone by the Sun. Thus the normally visible Moon is consumed, as it were, by the Sun's fiery embrace to be released on the following day in a purified and rejuvenated form when the First Crescent or Digit of the Moon becomes visible again.

In consequence, **New Moon**, or more accurately, **No Moon** occurs at the end of the Lunar Month when the Last Crescent of the Waning Moon, which was visible on the horizon just before sunrise on the previous day, is no longer seen.

NOTE: Strictly speaking, the moment of New Moon in the Indian Calendar marks the end of one Month and the beginning of the next. In practice, however, while **New Moon Day (Amavasya)** is reckoned as the last day of the expiring Month, the following day is called the **First (Pratipada or Prathama)** of the begining Month.

The second day is called the Second, and so on up to the fifteenth day which is called Full Moon (Purnima). This makes a complete Fortnight or Half Month (Paksha or Ardha Masa) of fifteen days. After Full Moon, the second Half Month commences with day First (Pratipada), and so on, until the next New Moon or last day of the Month. Thus the basic unit of time after the Day, is the Fortnight.

Bright Fortnight (Shukla Paksha)	Dark Fortnight (Krishna Paksha)
1st. Pratipada (First Crescent)	1st. Pratipada

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2nd. Dvitiya	2nd. Dvitiya
3rd. Tritiya	3rd. Tritiya
4th. Chaturthi	4th. Chaturthi
5th. Panchami	5th. Panchami
6th. Shashthi	6th. Shashthi
7th. Saptami	7th. Saptami
8th. ASHTAMI (First Quarter)	8th. ASHTAMI (Last Quarter)
9th. Navami	9th. Navami
10th. Dashami	10th. Dashami
11th. Ekadashi	11th. Ekadashi
12th. Dvadashi	12th. Dvadashi
13th. Trayodashi	13th. Trayodashi
14th. Chaturdashi	14th. Chaturdashi (Shivaratri)
15th. PURNIMA (Full Moon)	15th. AMAVASYA (New Moon)

The date of **Maha Shivaratri** would be given as "**Magha Krishna Chaturdashi**" or "the Fourteenth of the Dark Half of Magha"; **Teej (Tritya Tithi)** would be "**Bhadrapada Shukla Tritya**" or "the Third of the Dark Half of Bhadrapada", etc. If we wish to indicate the year, we need to add, for instance, **Kali Yuga (the Current Indian Age) 5106** before the month: (1) **KY 5106, Magha Kr. 14** or short (2) **5106, Magha 29** (the 14th of the Dark Fortnight being the same as the 29th of the Month); (3) Shorter still would be **5106. 11. 29**. However, the first example would be the clearest, unless the intended reader is familiar with the calendar used.

Holy Days

The most frequently observed holy days of the Indian Calendar are the Eighth and the Fifteenth of every Half Month. Thus counting from the first day after New Moon, we have: (1) the Eighth of the Bright Half (First Quarter), (2) the Fifteenth of the Bright Half (Full Moon), (3) the Eighth of the Dark Half (Last Quarter) and (4) the Fifteenth of the Dark Half (New Moon). As they occur at intervals of approximately seven days, they are comparable to the weekly holidays of Western faiths.

In addition to these weekly holidays there is a very important monthly one, namely, **Shiva Ratri**, which takes place on the 14th day of the Dark Half of the Month or the day before New Moon (Amavasya, as defined above).

Both Shiva Ratri (the Night of Shiva) and New Moon are sacred to the Supreme Lord and are celebrated together as part of a two-day festival that marks the end of one month and the

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beginning of the next. Traditionally, Shiva Ratri is a three-day (or 36-hour) festival lasting approximately from midnight on the 13th to midday on the 15th or New Moon Day (Amavasya).

The Half Year

In the same way as Lunar Months are divided into bright and dark Fortnights or Half Months, Solar Years are divided into Half Years of Six Months each.

The Year is conceived of as a wheel consisting of the circular movement of the Sun in relation to Earth. The first half of the wheel or Half Year is that during which daylight increases. The Sun is then said to take a northward course for which reason this Half Year is called the **Northern or Higher Path (Uttara Ayana)**.

The second half of the Year is that during which daylight decreases and the Sun is said to take a southward course. For this reason, it is known as the **Southern or Lower Path (Dakshina Ayana)**.

Days, Hours and Minutes

As in the calendars of Ancient Sumer, Egypt and China, the **Day** in Indian timekeeping is always calculated as commencing at sunrise as opposed to midnight (as in the West) or sunset (as in certain Middle Eastern traditions). A **Day (Vara)** as a 24-hour unit of time, therefore, lasts from one sunrise (6 a.m.) to the next.

The Standard Indian Time used in the traditional calendar is called **Lanka Time**. It is based on the longitude of the Central-Indian City of **Ujjain** (75° 46' 6") and the latitude of an island situated on the equator in the Indian Ocean and having the same longitude as Ujjain, called **Lanka (after Shri Lanka)**.

The basic division of the **Day** is the **Prahara** or **Watch** which is a period of three hours. Thus the day proper lasts four Watches from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the night lasts a further four Watches from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., giving a total of eight Watches per Day. Midnight, for example, falls on the beginning of the 3rd Watch (or Prahara) of the night, sunrise in the first Watch of the day, etc.

The **Day** is further divided into thirty **Muhurta** of 48 minutes. Apart from this, the Western and Indian systems are very much the same in that they are both sexagesimal, that is, they reckon by the 60th part of a unit.

Thus one **Muhurta** equals two **Ghatika** (2×24 min.). Therefore, one **Day** (30 Muhurta) equals sixty **Ghatika** (60×24 min.); one **Ghatika** equals sixty **Chashaka** (60×24 sec.) and one **Chashaka** equals sixty **Nimesha (Twinklings)** (60×0.4 sec.).

The Indian Muhurta (48 min.) is roughly the equivalent of the Western hour; the Ghatika the equivalent of half an hour; the Chashaka half a minute and the Nimesha half a second.

As the Western system is known to have evolved in the East, it is obvious that both systems have a **common origin**.

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The Four World Ages

One of the fundamental fallacies of Western and Western-influenced scholars when studying Indian culture, is their inability to grasp the fact that it is essentially Spiritual. The Indian Calendar is no exception. Far from being a mere instrument for calculating time, it represents a living expression of the timeless Spirituality of India.

The Ancient Scriptures of India (Rig Veda) compare life to the rolling wheels of carts, bringing sometimes good, sometimes bad fortune, as it revolves. Just as night and day follow each other, so also everything, from an individual person to the whole of Mankind, goes through alternating periods of prosperity and decline, of decay and regeneration.

In the Yoga Tradition, Time is divided into **World Ages** or **Yugas**. The first of these is **Satya Yuga**, the **Golden Age of Enlightenment and Truth** which is the longest, lasting 4,800 Celestial Years. (One Celestial Year equals 360 terrestrial years.) The second **World Age** is **Treta Yuga**, the **Silver Age of Devotion** lasting 3,600 Celestial Years. The third **World Age**, called **Dvapara Yuga**, is the **Copper Age of Reason** which lasts 2,400 Celestial Years. The fourth and last **World Age** is the shortest. It lasts only 1,200 Celestial Years and is known as **Kali Yuga** or the **Iron Age of Action**. Being a time of growing Spiritual decline, it is also known as the **Age of Darkness**.

This Four-Age Cycle repeats itself many times over till the End of the World when Material Creation is reabsorbed into the Universal Spirit (Parama Shiva). As we are only 5100 years into the Last World Age, the End of the World is not imminent. **Although Western Scriptures like the Bible and the Quran declare it to be "near", the End of the World has clearly not happened and it will not happen for a long time to come.**

Kali Yuga - the Age of Darkness

This, of course, does not mean to say that Mankind is "safe". As already indicated, the World is going through a phase of Spiritual decline. To be sure, within the main downward course, there are brief periods of rising and falling. Individuals, groups of people and even entire nations may, indeed, temporarily prosper. Yet the general state of the World is indisputably one of decline.

The real threat is not that God will wipe out the World out of the blue. The Enlightened Yogis and Prophets (Rishis) of India assure us that there is no danger from God Who is Our Creator and Friend. The World will come to an end one day, but not yet. The true danger comes not from God but from man himself.

Materialism, immorality, crime, violence, war, genocide, disease, overpopulation, poverty, the destruction of natural resources and environmental disasters are not the work of God but the result of man's own actions. And they are on the rise. Even the most sceptical among us cannot deny what is patent fact.

India is herself an adequate illustration of this situation. Rich in natural resources and blessed with an ideal, life-promoting climate, India was a true Paradise on Earth in prehistoric times.

Historical and archaeological records show that early in her history India was a great nation that extended from Thailand in the East to Afghanistan in the West and from Tibet in the North to

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Shri Lanka in the South. Close cultural and economic ties with Ancient Europe, Egypt and East Asia, made India one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations on Earth up to the 10th and 11th centuries of the current era.

Today, much of Ancient India is under the brutal occupation of foreign powers and her people are either enslaved or divided by cultural, political and religious conflicts. Kashmir, Afghanistan and Pakistan, once home to many a renowned centre of Yogic, Hindu and Buddhist learning, are now hotbeds of international terrorism. The same applies to many other places on Earth, mainly in Asia and Africa but increasingly also in the Americas and Europe.

According to the time records of the Ancient Yoga Masters and Prophets (Rishis) this global process of human degradation and degeneration began with the present World Age in the year 3102 BC (before the current era), that is over 5100 years ago, in the third watch of the night on New Moon Day in the Month of Magha (midnight between 17th and 18th February).

As Scripture declares, Karma produces its fruit slowly, like the Earth. The fruits of past sins are now slowly engulfing the World like the shadow of death. Light shall return to Earth only when Mankind embraces Yoga Dharma which is the Eternal Path of Unity with the Supreme.

The historical proof

As the traditional Indian Calendar begins with **Kali Yuga Year 1**, it is obviously far ahead of its modern Western counterpart. To convert a Kali Yuga date into a Western one, it is necessary to subtract 3102 from the former. Conversely, Western (AD or CE, current era) dates are translated into their Kali Yuga equivalents by adding 3102. For example, CE (AD) **2004** + 3102 = **KY 5106** current or 5105 expired, depending on the month and day.

It is noteworthy that the date of 3102 BC or the approximate equivalent thereof, appears to have been important in the traditions of Ancient Egypt, Central America and other Ancient Civilisations. Thus, in the Egyptian tradition, the year 3101 BC commemorates the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt (under King Menes). Similarly, in the Maya tradition of Central America, 3114 BC marks the beginning of a New World Age. (In common with the traditions of India - Yogic, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist - the Maya believed in recurring cycles of World Renewal, Preservation and Degeneration.)

The exception to this is the Jewish tradition, where 3761 BC represents the beginning or creation of the World. However, as the World was clearly created long before that date, it cannot mark the creation itself but the **beginning of a New World Age**. The Jewish tradition therefore represents a deviation from both the universally accepted, original date and its significance.

It is difficult to reconstruct the exact circumstances and events that occasioned this corruption of the Original Teaching. Perhaps internal and external conflicts made it difficult for the Spiritual leaders of the Jewish people to preserve the Original Teaching in all its details. The fact remains that this deviation was later inadvertently adopted by the Christian and Muslim traditions and resulted in the Western World's separation from, and opposition to, the Original World Faith (Adi Dharma). This confusion and conflict is, of course, the distinctive characteristic of the Age of Darkness (Kali Yuga) as predicted by the Prophets of India. Which again proves our point.

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The concordance between the chronological traditions of the various Great Civilisations of the World (Indian, Egyptian, Central American), constitutes proof that some extraordinary event must have occurred at that time, which marked the beginning of a New Era in the history of Mankind.

In consequence, the question that may be raised at this point is, why was the 18th February 3002 so important as to calculate time from that date? There are a number of reasons of which we shall enumerate but a few:

- (1) Regarding the day, Shiva Ratri, Shiva's Fourteenth, or New Moon Eve marks the advent of the New Moon which is the end of a month and the beginning of a new one.
- (2) Regarding the month or time of the year, Shiva Ratri in the Month of Magha falls on the end of February and the beginning of March, giving or taking a fortnight - according to the phases of the Moon. This is the time of the year when Winter comes to an end and Spring arrives bringing light and warmth. Many plants now begin to give new leaves. It is therefore a celebration of new life and the appropriate time to begin a new year.
- (3) At the same time, the Month of Magha (late February - March) is the end of the agricultural year when, in many parts of India, food crops such as barley and wheat are reaped and gathered in. It therefore represents an occasion to celebrate harvest time and the generosity of God's Creation. The year, therefore, had began at that time since earliest prehistoric time.
- (4) Regarding the century, it represents the beginning of a New World Age, in which Mankind enters a new and critical phase in its history. Modern scientists have confirmed that some 5,200 - 5,100 years ago there was a shift in the Earth's axis which resulted in major climate changes affecting the lives of people all over the World.

Many Ancient Civilisations perished as a result of excessive cold or heat, floods, drought, crop failure, war and disease. To the West of India, the century immediately preceding the fifth millennium before the present day, marked the fall of Sumer (Ancient Mesopotamia) to foreign powers and the beginning of a steady decline of its unique civilisation. India herself was, and still is, similarly affected.

- (5) Regarding the year, **the most important reason for the calendar itself to begin in 3102 BC, is not material but Spiritual.** From a purely Spiritual point of view, Maha Shivaratri celebrates the Supreme Lord's Revelation or Re-Introduction of the Eternal Teachings of Yoga (Yoga Dharma) to Mankind, which occurs at the beginning of each World Age, including the current Age, Kali Yuga.

Says Scripture: "In every World Age, Lord Shiva incarnates as Teacher of Yoga (Yogacharya) and propagates its wisdom for the Salvation of His devotees" (Shiva Purana, Vayaviya Samhita I, 32:14; II, 8:43, etc.). Thus the Shiva Ratri festival reminds us of the fact that human life has a Spiritual purpose and that we must be grateful to the Supreme Lord for showing us the Right Way in which we may fulfil that purpose. This is the true meaning of that date.

As we shall presently demonstrate, the intent and purpose of the Indian Calendar is primarily Spiritual.

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The Calendar of Ancient India

The traditional Indian Calendar was originally lunar - "The Moon is that which shapes the years" says the Rig Veda - and it remains essentially unchanged even today.

The movement of the Sun - or his position relative to Earth - was undoubtedly employed for determining the seasons and marking important activities such as sowing and harvesting, from prehistoric times.

Regular occurrences like the **solstices** and **equinoxes** are closely connected with weather conditions such as changes in daylight, air temperature, etc. In consequence, they couldn't have escaped ancient man's keen sense of observation. Likewise, the Sun's path across the firmament linked him with certain constellations giving rise to the twelve Signs of the Zodiac.

For this reason, the Indian Solar Year commences with the Sun's entrance into the Sign of Aries (Ram) which is variously calculated as falling on 21st of April (traditional) or 22nd of March (reformed calendar, see above).

However, apart from astrology and agriculture, the Solar Year has never attained much importance in India. Religious holidays continue to be observed according to the phases of the Moon. The Lunar Cycle, therefore, remains the most important, religiously and Spiritually speaking. The calendar described in the Ancient Gospels of India (Puranas) is essentially lunar.

The Rig Veda on its part, speaks of a 360-day, twelve-month year which may refer to a solar calendar. Thus it is written: "The holy priests, by their seasons know, O Sun God! those two wheels of yours: one kept concealed, those only who are skilled in highest truths have learned" (X 85:16). And again, "Formed with twelve spokes, by length of time, unweakened, rolls round the Heaven this wheel of during Order. Herein established, joined in pairs together, seven hundred Sons and twenty stand, O Fiery One!" (I 164:11).

The twelve spokes of course are the twelve Months. The Wheel is the Solar Year. The seven hundred and twenty Sons (or Children) of the Sun God are the 360 Days and 360 Nights which are "joined together in pairs".

Interestingly, during excavations carried out in the 1980's near Karachi, there was found a jar containing jewellery from the Indus Valley period (2000 BC), including a string of thirty-six elongated carnelian (reddish stone) beads interspersed with bronze beads. It would seem reasonable to surmise that it represented a form of portable calendar, one bead symbolising a period of ten days. As in the lunar calendar, the solar year had 360 days divided into 12 months of 30 days each. The months in turn were divided into three ten-day periods prior to the introduction of the seven-day week.

Solar calendars based on a 360-day year, no doubt existed in India as in Ancient Egypt, Sumer and elsewhere. Such a calendar, however, would have required the addition of five extra days at the end of each year to match the actual duration of a solar cycle. And it would have required a further addition of one day every four years to maintain its synchrony with the Sun.

The Lunar Calendar, on the other hand, requires no such adjustments. It may be harmonised with the Solar Cycle as in the present-day Indian Calendar. Yet it can equally well run indefinitely

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on its own, the sole requirement being the regular observation of the phases of the Moon as they naturally occur. For this reason, it is the preferred method of religious time keeping in Yoga as in Hinduism and Buddhism. To determine a lunar date in advance, lay people usually rely on priests and astrologers. Monks on the other hand, often use their own personal calendar.

The Calendar as a Path to Enlightenment

We have seen, during our discussion on **Kali Yuga**, that the Kali Yuga Calendar reckons the passage of time from the midnight of New Moon Day in the Month of Magha. Now the New Moon Eve of Magha happens to be the Holy Night of Shiva (Shiva Ratri).

This can only mean one thing: **that Maha Shivaratri originally marked the end of a year and the beginning of the next.**

Thus in his Encyclopedia of Religion, professor Mircea Eliade writes: "Mahashivaratri, the Great Night of Shiva, the climax of the religious year, is celebrated on the fourteenth lunar day of the dark half of the **last month of the Lunar Year**.

This is only natural, as Maha Shivaratri takes place at the end of Magha, the last Winter month. The first month of the year, therefore was Phalgun which is the first month of Spring.

Indeed, Lord Shiva has always been associated with Spring. The Holy Scriptures of India describe Mount Kailasa, Shiva's abode on Earth, as a place where Spring eternally reigns, where forests resound with the passionate song of Indian cuckoos (heralds of Spring), etc. Moreover, Spring (Vasanta Panchami) is celebrated in the same month as Maha Shivaratri, namely, on Magha Shukla 5.

It follows from this that the lunar year and by extension, the Lunar Calendar itself, was dedicated to Lord Shiva. This is evidenced by the fact that throughout India every New Moon Eve (the end of every month) is observed in honour of Lord Shiva.

Nor is this surprising. For the Supreme Lord (Parama Shiva) is the Lord of Eternity or Endless Time (Maha Kala). As Lord of Time (Kala-Natha) He rules over past, present and future. His Emblem is the Crescent Moon which He wears in His Crown.

The Moon (Masa) is that which has measured time from the beginning of the World. As Scripture puts it, "The Moon is that which shapes the years". Time itself (Kala) is the Power whereby the Supreme Being measures up or divides His Undivided, Unmeasured Eternal Self (Nishkala) into measured, limited portions of time (Kala) thereby giving life to the Universe of phenomena.

Time (Kaala), Moon Digit (Kalaa, the sixteenth part of the Moon's diameter) and Atom (Kalaa, unit of existence) all come from the root Kal, to count, to measure. For this reason, the Supreme Lord, the Lord of Time, is known as "He Who bears the Digit of the Moon" (Kala-Dhara) and "Lord of Destiny" (Kala-Yogin).

All created things are determined by Time. Time brings things into the World and Time takes them away. By understanding Time we understand how the Creation, Maintenance and Dissolution of all things comes about. Finally we understand the Highest Mystery of all: the Holder of the Power of Time, Supreme Lord Shiva Himself. As the great Marathi poet and Saint,

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Jnanadeva, has said in the Amritanubhava: "Where there are flames, there is also fire; when we catch hold of Shakti (Divine Power), we have Shiva as well" (I, 24).

Shiva Mahadeva - Lord of Time

To be Lord of Time means to be Lord over Life and Death. Yama Rajah, the God of Death, is a Manifestation of the Supreme Lord. He is Shiva's Divine Messenger (Dutah) who summons the Souls to start on their journey of return to their Creator, when their time has come. This is why Shiva is sometimes erroneously regarded as the God of Destruction. In reality, He is the Lord of Everything (Vishvanatha). As death is part of life, the Lord of Life is also Lord of Death. The death of the physical body is necessary for the Soul to start a new life. Thus Death is not destruction but a new beginning. This is the secret of life.

Lord Shiva is not only Lord of Eternal Time, He is also Lord of Enlightenment. He who knows the secret of Time, knows everything. The Moon, therefore, which symbolises knowledge of Time, also symbolises Spiritual Knowledge in general. Indeed, the Crescent Moon, Shiva's Sacred Emblem, means growing light (from Latin crescere, to grow). This fact is borne out by Yogic Scriptures with such titles as "Moonlight of Consciousness and Being", "Moon Wisdom", etc.

The Shiva Samhita advises Spiritual seekers to contemplate on the sixteen-digit (i.e., Full) Moon shining in the place between the eyebrows where resides the **Great White Lord of Time (Shukla Mahaakaala)**. By doing this without interruption for three days the Yogi becomes free of sin, he knows the future and is endowed with magic powers (V, 96,148).

The Moon, therefore, represents the Pure, Spiritual Knowledge (Shuddha Vidya) of Enlightenment. Becoming enlightened means to allow Shiva's Infinite Light (Ananta Prakasha) into our life so that our entire existence is filled by it in the same way as the disc of the Moon is full of light when the Moon is Full. When that happens, man sees the World as it really is and his Soul becomes united with the Supreme Light like the flame of a candle joining a larger flame.

Man begins his life on Earth by breathing in his first and departs from this World by breathing out his last breath. In Yoga, therefore, breath is equated with both life and time. The air we breathe in represents the past and the air we breathe out the future. The interval between inbreath and outbreak is the present moment. The outbreak (prana) represents the day and the inbreath (apana) the night. The interval between them in dusk and dawn.

The outbreak is the dark fortnight when the Moon empties herself to nourish the World with her light while the inbreath is the bright fortnight when the Moon is nourished by the Sun of Consciousness in our heart. The interval between is the sixteenth digit of the Moon on which the two half months of fifteen days revolve.

The outbreak is the half year from Capricorn to Gemini and the inbreath is the half year from Cancer to Sagittarius. Or the half years from the Month of Phalgun to Shravana and from Bhadrapada to Magha. The intervals between the two are the winter and summer solstices, the beginning and end of Spring and Autumn, etc.

Says Scripture: "Within every breath there is contained every period of time: the hours, the days, the months, the years and the space of many years". Such is the glory of the Sacred Calendar of

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India, which, when properly understood by means of the Eternal Wisdom of Yoga, becomes a stairway to the Highest Heaven!

The awareness of the correspondence between inner biological processes and outer natural phenomena leads to the experience of Unity between the personal and Cosmic dimensions of existence, enabling the Yogi to enjoy Union with the Supreme (Shiva-Samyoga). By contrast, he who fails to develop this awareness is a failed Yogi.

Thus it is written: "Without knowledge of the true nature of creation, maintenance and dissolution, there can be no Liberation for as has been said in the Yogasamchara Tantra, Liberation is caused by the knowledge of all things. The Yogis who ignore this are not liberated, for they are bound by the fetters of their own ignorance" (Tantraloka).
